

History Lesson

Program focuses on
Duxbury's role in Civil War

By Kathryn Koch
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DUXBURY - Thousands of men lost their lives in battle 150 years ago during the four-year American Civil War. Among them were more than 200 men from Duxbury.

The conflict began in April 1861, and the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society launched a four-year program last month recognizing the sesquicentennial of the Civil War and examining how the war affected not only the men at the

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1st Sgt. Soule, a Duxbury native, is on the right. COURTESY PHOTO

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front but also the people back home.

The centerpiece of the program, the blog duxburyinthecivilwar.wordpress.com, will be updated weekly with articles examining the lives of Duxbury people involved in the war, artifacts in the society's collection pertaining to the war and general Civil War history. The blog debuted April 12.

The society's executive director, Patrick Browne, has a particular interest in the Civil War. For the last 13 years, he has been a Civil War re-enactor on the side of the Federal Army. He looks forward to participating in a re-enactment of the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Bull Run in July.

"Just the enormity of it, the massive historical importance of it and the way it nearly split our

country in two is most fascinating," he said.

Browne credits Assistant Director Alison Arnold with the idea for a series on the Civil War featuring a blog, lectures and special events and exhibits - and possibly even a re-enactment in the fall - to mark the occasion of the departure of one of the first and largest groups of Duxbury soldiers for the war front.

Arnold will blog about the roster and service records of Duxbury men, while Browne will blog about the broader context of the war. Archivist Carolyn Ravenscroft will blog about actual letters and journals and photographs, and curator Patricia Gilrein will blog about artifacts in the society's collection.

"I think this will be a good source of information, with a little something for everybody," he said.

Browne said Arnold's six months of intense research

augments what was already known about Duxbury's involvement in the Civil War. The society has records about who from Duxbury served in the war, where they served, what battles they fought and if they were wounded or killed.

"The experiences of some of these men is mind boggling," he said.

At home, women of the U.S. Sanitary Commission helped provide food and medicine to soldiers. There were also women who disguised themselves as men to fight in the war. While no women from Duxbury are recorded to have done so, the society has a letter written to Charlotte Bradford, a nurse from Duxbury, from a woman who did.

"We have correspondence in our collection that is post-war, with the woman writing Charlotte saying she had since married," he said.

Arnold has been encouraging more of an online presence for

the society for easy access to its records. It's the first time that the society has combined online resources with a traditional exhibition on such a large scale.

"In that regard, this is the first of its kind that we've done," he said.

The annual exhibit this year at the King Caesar House will also focus on the Civil War. Artifacts from the homefront and warfront will be on display.

A special reception is planned for June 24.

Several of the summer lectures in the annual series beginning July 7 will follow the Civil War theme.

The look back on four years of the Civil War follows Duxbury boys into battle and explores what life was like on campaign. Anyone with artifacts, letters or journals of people from Duxbury during the Civil War willing to share them is asked to call 781-934-6106 or email aarnold@duxburyhistory.org.



Sgt. James K. Burgess. Co. E. 23rd
served Sept 10/86 to June 12, 1865
3 yrs 10 mos.

James K. Burgess who, after the war, owned the Burgess
Boat Yard at the end of Shipyard Lane. COURTESY PHOTOS



Charlotte Bradford, a Civil War nurse from Duxbury.